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ABSTRACT

This book examines the stereotypes and superficial categorizations of America's children in crisis, and discusses the nature of childhood disadvantage. Findings from interviews with children and professionals, and a reexamination of past and present research, reveal that most children at risk are not poor. The evidence suggests that factors such as chronic parental stress and depression have a more powerful influence on a child's fate than whether or not there are two parents in the home or whether or not the family lives below the poverty line. Studies show that relocation, social isolation, problems with hearing and vision, lack of opportunities for accomplishment, learning disabilities, and obesity are the subtle variables that profoundly affect the lives of children regardless of race or class. The first part of the book describes at-risk children in the United States and the second part offers suggestions for how institutions related to children's success. The chapters of the book are: (1) "What Ever Happened to Huckleberry Finn?" discounting prevailing perceptions of disadvantaged children as drawn too narrowly; (2) "The Real Roots of Success and Failure," offering a complex model for determining children who are vulnerable; (3) "Families United," examining changing family structures; (4) "Looking Inside Families," looking at the quality of parenting, sibling relationships, and family patterns; (5) "The Roots of Gangs and Cliques"; (6) "Communities: More than Kind and Less than Kin"; (7) "The Troubles of Ghetto Children"; (8) "Why Our Efforts to Help Children Fail"; (9) "Healthy Starts," describing successes in child-care institutions; (10) "Schools That Work"; (11) "Even If the Boat Goes Down: Child Protective Services"; (12) "The Police," advocating community policing; (13) "Beyond the Edifice Complex: What Cities Can Do." Contains 18 references. (AMC)